



Our Children. Our Schools. Our Future.

JULY 2013

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Summer vacation in Arizona is drawing to a close, and students are heading back to school to engage in another year of learning.

Although this **formal learning** is a significant element of a student's development, activities at home or elsewhere provide important supports. **Informal learning**, or learning that takes place outside of the classroom, is incredibly valuable to helping a student connect what they learn in the classroom to the real world. This is where parents play a key role as a partner in their child's education.

We often think of informal learning as a summer activity. Summer reading lists, summer camps and clubs are good options and essential to prevent what is known as "summer learning loss."

But this focus on informal learning should not end with summer vacation. In fact, it can become more intentional and help support the skills being taught in the classroom.

Simple things like reading as a family, following recipes with your children, or playing with blocks can all be educational. A trip to a local museum or zoo, or participating in a specific club or community organization can also be educational. The important elements are **intentionality** and **engagement**. Children are more likely to remember new information if they can make connections to things they've learned before. **Making these connections is essential to targeting their memory and creating lasting brain pathways that will help them remember what they learn.**

It's actually not as hard as it sounds. Here are a few easy steps:

1. Find a topic your child is interested in. This could be a subject they learned in class, or something they read in a book, or even something they saw in movie.
2. Connect that topic to their favorite subject in school—a math fact; a scientific process; a historical event; a great work of literature.
3. Be very clear that you are purposefully showing them that things they learn in school help them with the topics they like.
4. Ask questions about what they're doing and learning, and ask them how it connects to their favorite activity. Showing that you have an interest in the activity demonstrates that you think learning is important and fun.

So as we all embark on a new school year, take some time to meet with your child's teacher and learn about what skills your child will be learning this year. And, when you have a chance, help at home by creating intentional, informal learning experiences.

Sincerely,
The Arizona Ready Team

HIGHLIGHTS

[Governor's 2013
Summer Reading
Program](#)

- Find out more information on our website under the "Get Involved" tab!

RESOURCES

[Paper](#) on informal learning and science

Arizona Office of Tourism [List](#) of Children's Museums and Zoos
(Also their [guide](#) to the whole state)

[Outline](#) of what skills your child should be learning in class this year

In the News

- Stay updated on the latest education news with Arizona Ready!

